



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Defence Committee

Oral evidence: US, UK and NATO, HC 184

Tuesday 24 May 2022

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Members present: Mr Tobias Ellwood (Chair); Sarah Atherton; Dave Doogan; Richard Drax; Mr Mark Francois; Mr Kevan Jones; Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck; John Spellar; Derek Twigg.

Questions 121 - 208

Witness

I: General (Rtd) Sir James Everard KCB CBE, former Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (DSACEUR), NATO



Examination of Witness

Witness: Sir James Everard.

Q121 **Chair:** Welcome to this Defence Select Committee hearing taking place on Tuesday 24 May 2022, where we are continuing our investigation and discussion into the UK, US and NATO. I am delighted to welcome General Sir James Everard here today. Thank you for your time this afternoon. You had a distinguished career in the British Army going all the way back to 1983 with the 17th/21st Lancers. You had a number of roles, as you would expect, and worked your way up. Most critically, you were the four-star Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe for NATO, leaving the Army in 2020.

Sir, you are welcome here today. There are lots of issues to cover. We are going to start big, looking at NATO, and then concentrate and focus a little on the very topical subject of Ukraine. I am going to ask Derek Twigg to kick us off.

Derek Twigg: In your view, what is the current perception of the UK among NATO allies? Has it improved as a result of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russians?

Sir James Everard: I might just add that I was DSACEUR but I am currently the lead senior mentor for Allied Command Operations, so I spend a lot of time with NATO, which is helpful.

When NATO looks at a nation, it says it judges it on three things—cash, capabilities and commitment. Of course, there is that much larger piece to do with character and, clearly, the UK is a big player in the alliance, for all the reasons I am sure you have covered—founding member, member of the Quad, member of the Quint, member of the P3 and very active on enhanced forward presence in Estonia. Doubling the number of troops there as an instant reaction to the invasion of Ukraine was hugely well received in NATO, because it shows deed, not necessarily word.

We have a very strong military representation in the alliance. If you count a four-star as four stars, we are somewhere over 50 stars' worth of people in the alliance somewhere, and we have always been on the golden step in terms of our fill rate for NATO. When I was DSACEUR, it was always over 90%. It is about 93% today, which is probably better than any of the other big players. Of course, we have a much broader network, be it with the Commonwealth, the Five Eyes or the JEF, so we have a very good starting place and the UK is very well viewed in the alliance.

I come back to those three Cs. In terms of cash, we are over 2%, and the concerns that I voice here are probably the same ones that you would voice for everybody. People always wonder how you count it and how you spend it, but, at 2%, we are pretty good.



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In terms of commitment, the UK is, again, golden. We do an awful lot in terms of NATO missions, operations and activities, all slightly different, and a lot of things that indirectly support NATO.

In terms of capabilities, that is more complicated. I do not know whether you have touched on the NATO defence planning process, but, in very simple terms, NATO looks at its level of ambition, which is endorsed by its leaders. It then identifies and brokers out all the capabilities that are required to deliver that. There are 350-plus, and nations are given a target, which they sign in blood to deliver.

On that basis, in the air and maritime domain, the UK is pretty good. In the land domain, there are gaps between what we have said we would commit and what we do commit, primarily because, through the defence review, we have chosen to look at the manner in which you fight differently, which changes the calculus in a way that perhaps the NATO defence planning process has not caught up with yet.

Q122 Derek Twigg: So your general view is that we are well respected and still seen as a big player?

Sir James Everard: Yes. It is interesting that NATO is an alliance that really values continuity and a deep knowledge of the issues that you are working on. It values the friendships that people build up over time. I know there are lots of reasons for this but, in my three years as DSACEUR, I had four Defence Secretaries, so you inevitably do not have that level of continuity and perhaps depth of friendship that people would like to see. Then again, our current Defence Secretary has been there since 2019, so he has that.

Q123 Derek Twigg: So political changes can have an effect?

Sir James Everard: Yes, political changes. "Where are you going?" Of course, Brexit was going on and, therefore, we looked a bit divided and distracted. That will not surprise you. You had the backdrop of the EU. Remember that DSACEUR is double-hatted as the NATO commander and also the EU strategic co-ordinator, so you had that going on.

In large part, people move beyond those things very quickly, and the UK is well viewed. It is deed that they like to see. Word is one thing. We have a good track record of acting around the world in ways that support the alliance directly and indirectly.

Q124 Derek Twigg: That is helpful. On the issue of deed and political issues, which you mentioned, and given that part of the question was about the current situation following the invasion of Ukraine, you mentioned that you are still mentoring and so you have a lot of contact with people.

In terms of the view they have of the British and some of the belligerent comments that have been made by the Secretary of State, and the most recent one by the Foreign Secretary about not having a last Russian remaining on Ukrainian soil, do comments like that help the situation or



might they cause some consternation within NATO? That is particularly as we are not involved on the ground, but it is highly unlikely that the Ukrainians are going to remove the Russians completely from Ukrainian soil, although it may be that the Russians will never be able to conquer Ukraine. What do you think about comments like, "Until the last Russian soldiers are removed from Ukraine, there is no peace deal"?

Sir James Everard: The language around NATO and Ukraine is interesting, because people talk about allies. When you talk about allies, you tend to be talking about people operating under NATO direction. Of course, it is not allies, but nations acting unilaterally. NATO has played a very good hand, for reasons I can explain if you are interested. In terms of Ukraine, it is up to nations to say what they want to say. The alliance keeps very clear blue water between what nations are saying nationally and what they say within the alliance.

Q125 **Derek Twigg:** Does the alliance think it is going to be a situation where every Russian soldier is removed from Ukrainian territory? Is that a realistic view on the ground from the people in NATO?

Sir James Everard: The alliance view would be that it will be between Russia and Ukraine to determine the end state of this crisis. Where people make statements that shake that, it is probably unhelpful, so we have to wait and see.

Q126 **Derek Twigg:** So certain statements can be unhelpful?

Sir James Everard: Yes. Inevitably, certain statements can be unhelpful, but there is huge admiration for what the British and other nations did before the event to help Ukraine.

Q127 **Derek Twigg:** Sorry to interrupt, but there is a difference between doing things and providing equipment, and what you say in terms of policy, is there not?

Sir James Everard: There is, absolutely, but perhaps you are stirring the loins and all that sort of stuff.

Q128 **Chair:** We just came back from Norfolk, Virginia last year, and it was prior to Ukraine but after Afghanistan. What was the mood in NATO? You say you have a deep understanding of the issues, but you also mentioned the thoroughfare of Defence Secretaries there has been. In Afghanistan, after so many years, what could NATO have done better to have concluded that themselves as an organisation?

Sir James Everard: Afghanistan is one of those subjects where you find that lots of people do not understand the background, perhaps because they try to reinvent history. If you look at Afghanistan—and you have been there lots of times—you have to remember that you have a NATO non-combat mission, which includes Americans, and you have an American combat mission which includes allies, so it is all higgledy-piggledy, under the command of a single US four-star commander. Then the capacity-building mission cannot function without the war-fighting



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mission. They rely on each other, and that is a US national mission, so, when they decide to go, you are in trouble. The peace support mission looks shaky.

There was absolutely no appetite in the alliance anywhere to return NATO at that stage to a combat mission. You could really feel that. If you are not prepared to reinvest and make up for the capabilities that the US are taking out, you really have only one option, which is to go. I think 49 nations provided troops to Afghanistan at one stage or another. A large percentage of those were not going because of NATO. They were going in support of the US and, when the US was going to go, they were also going to go. Of course, you had the Americans briefing the military committee and the North Atlantic Council, probably around May 2021, saying, "Now is the time that you need to get out because we are going to go quickly," which is what they did.

Sitting suspended.

On resuming—

Chair: General, sorry for the interruption. You were just completing your thoughts on Afghanistan.

Sir James Everard: There was no political will or probably even popular will to return to a combat mission in Afghanistan, and so, when America said it was going, everybody went. As the force generator, the one thing that had kept the alliance welded together was this bumper sticker of "in together, out together." That is what had worked, and so, when the US said it was going, everybody followed. Of course, it was the execution of that withdrawal that was so chaotic and perhaps could have been done better.

Q129 **Chair:** When a particular leader of the western world gets bored with that bumper sticker and uses it for political leverage to depart, everybody else then has to depart. Maybe it is something for Madrid to consider.

Sir James Everard: Yes. It was worse than that, because it was President Trump who first mooted the idea that the US would go. President Trump was seen as not a great fan of the alliance and, therefore, it is probably better to comply with—

Chair: General, I am going to have to ask you to pause because one of our fans has been in touch to say they cannot hear you.

Sitting suspended.

On resuming—

Chair: General, sorry about that interruption. We will move straightaway and with haste to John Spellar.

Q130 **John Spellar:** General, you mentioned capabilities, and you contrasted air and naval capabilities, but also the question about land. Are there areas where NATO would like to see the UK invest in capabilities outside



of the proposals in the defence Command Paper, which, indeed, is arguably already outdated by recent events in Ukraine?

Sir James Everard: I do not know the answer to that. The NATO defence planning process identifies MSAs—major shortfall areas—because it is a fact that, after the cold war, you saw defence spending fall in Europe by an average of 30% between 1995 and 2015. What people disinvested in were those capabilities that you need for collective defence, so lots of ammunition, mass and air defence. Those are still capability shortfalls within the alliance. It is brokered out to nations to deliver those capabilities, and so the answer would lie somewhere in NDPP.

The alliance will have made an ask of the UK on those areas that it thinks it is good at. Likewise, the UK will be offering, no doubt, capabilities that we have and that we think we are good at ourselves, such as cyber.

Q131 **John Spellar:** Are the capabilities that the UK is capable of offering adequate for the task? Indeed, is the equipment in a sufficient state of readiness to fulfil any such task?

Sir James Everard: Every Supreme Allied Commander arrives at NATO and goes through a slight shock of capture when it comes to understanding the level of readiness. In UK terms, that would be the integration of manpower, equipment and training in the appropriate sustainment package. Most NATO countries are pretty good at the manpower. The equipment tends to be more dated than you would want it to be. The training is not bad, but we can come back to that.

In sustainment terms, for reasons I talked about, most allies are off the pace. When you look at fighting a war at range, which is what many allied nations say they want to do, it consumes huge amounts of artillery ammunition and, of course, rockets. I do not know whether we will go back and remodel our assumptions on artillery use based on the rates we are seeing used in Ukraine, but they are going through tens of thousands of rounds a week.

Q132 **John Spellar:** Moving on from capabilities to location, there has been welcome reinforcement in Estonia, and a number of colleagues have been there recently, but should that be the main area of focus? Should we be looking at other geographical areas for reinforcing capability?

Sir James Everard: No. One of the biggest weaknesses after the cold war was the fact you lost your regional focus. NATO at 360, which was often badly interpreted and meant everybody had to be able to go in every direction and do everything, made that even worse. The benefit of understanding the geography and the ground on which you are going to fight is hugely beneficial. Getting to know the armed forces of the host country you are going to fight with is hugely beneficial.

I hope—and this sits at the heart of the NATO new force model—that, when we come to deliver SACEUR's AOR strategic plan for the deterrence



and defence of the Euro-Atlantic area, which our leaders have signed up to, the UK will take a bold decision and tell people that it is going to focus in the north. It does not mean that you cannot send troops off, perhaps through the allied reaction force, to support other nations in the alliance. For example, I have a great passion for Romania, which I think is the bastion of NATO in the south. We should support it but, in the main, we should be focusing ourselves in the north, where, through the Joint Expeditionary Force, we have a network that works and has been building a level of interoperability and standardisation, which is what the alliance seeks to achieve.

Q133 **Chair:** You mentioned focusing in the north. The integrated review has a tilt to the Indo-Pacific. The world has moved on an awful lot since that document was written. Do you have thoughts on whether we should now be focusing more on our European theatre of operations?

Sir James Everard: Yes. The Pacific is still going to be a huge requirement for America, and I am sure that, when the NATO strategic concept is updated in June, it will have better language in relation to China and what we intend to do about China.

For me, we should be focusing on Europe, because that is where we have the greatest need and can have the greatest impact. I do not necessarily think that the tilt towards the Pacific was going to be massively military—yes, ships and things like that, but I did not see us sending a division off.

Chair: We do not have a lot of ships either.

Q134 **Mr Jones:** A couple of weeks ago I visited Latvia and the eFP, which is a very impressive nine nations led by the Canadians. The problem with that model is that it is a six-month work-up and then you get to the end. I asked the brigadier from Canada who was in charge of it, “What happens if the Russians invade when you are in week three of your work-up?” Does that concept have to be changed in terms of a permanent presence? That is certainly what the Estonians and Latvians want.

Sir James Everard: There are two problems with the model. The British avoided it in Estonia because we did not go for the flags approach, but many nations wanted to show their commitment to the alliance by contributing to an enhanced forward presence battlegroup, so you end up with these battlegroups that are hugely multinational. I do not know how many flags you saw. The most we have ever got to is probably 14.

Mr Jones: It was nine, including one Albanian.

Sir James Everard: The idea that this battlegroup is going to fight as well as a battlegroup that is made up of one or two nations is laughable. Then again, eFP was more about the political signal than the tripwire. When you move to deliver this new concept, first of all, you better integrate the host nation forces that are there, and you apply a better logic to the way you form up your forces to get away from this multinationality. The training piece is interesting, because, to send a



battlegroup to take its role in the eFP, it has to be at a certain standard. Yes, the integration needs to be done, but this is an inevitable downside of not having bases where, as in my early life of BAOR, you live there.

Q135 **Mrs Lewell-Buck:** Good afternoon, General. Just coming back to Tobias's point about the tilt to the Indo-Pacific, the 2010 strategic concept did not fully recognise the threat from Russia, but we have been told that there will be an analysis of the threat from China in the upcoming strategic concept. I am just curious, because it seems that there is some confusion about the relationship with China. We want to recognise the threat, but then we want to work with them on issues like climate change, and I am just not clear.

How well do we understand those threats and do we know that they are open to dialogue with us on things like climate change, or are we just making assumptions that we do not really know enough about?

Sir James Everard: The 2010 strategic concept needs to be changed, because it recognises Russia as a strategic partner. There is nothing wrong with the core task but that is clearly wrong, and we will see what it says. There are always tensions when you rewrite a strategic concept, because it is such a fundamentally important document to the alliance. Because the alliance has already agreed, through the NATO military strategy, further explained in this concept that I mentioned—the concept for deterrence and defence of the Euro-Atlantic area—the Russian threat is fairly easy to take across and embed in the treaty.

For China, you are dealing with 30 nations, all of which have different views. In my time, the favoured term used to be "systemic challenge". Americans would say "pacing threat," but NATO would not; it would say "systemic challenge." This comes back to one part of NATO, which wants NATO to become a bigger political alliance and to act as a forum for discussion on all the things that might be important, like trade in the Pacific. I do not know whether allies will sign up to that, but the military part of NATO is still going to be very much focused on the Euro-Atlantic area, not the Pacific. You would never get consensus between 30 nations to send off NATO capability, as a badged NATO force, to the Pacific.

Q136 **Mrs Lewell-Buck:** Just for my understanding, the military actions come from the strategic concept. If the strategic concept recognises threats and actions around China, where does that leave the military bit?

Sir James Everard: Wait for the language. The language will be something along the lines of, "It is a systemic challenge, and NATO partners and allies will meet and have a dialogue about how we address these challenges, perhaps in economic, informational and diplomatic terms." I do not think it will mention military. Lots of NATO allies have footprints in the Pacific anyway. France is a big player. The UK has the deputy commander in Korea at the moment, filling a gap for the Canadians, so we have an oversight there, but it is not our fight. The lines of communication would just make it impossible.



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Q137 **Chair:** Have you read the latest strategic concept paper?

Sir James Everard: I saw a draft about two weeks ago. I have not seen one since then.

Q138 **Chair:** Would you care to share what might be in there?

Sir James Everard: There are two tensions. There is a tension between those people who want it to have longevity and, therefore, want the writers to lift their eyes from the current nightmares and give you a vision for the future, and those who really want it to dig into our core purpose of collective defence, so you have that issue.

The second issue is this desire coming out of NATO 2030, which you will have read, to make the alliance a bigger political forum for discussing the key strategic issues of the day, climate change and all that, versus those who just want it to be a "big M" military alliance with a core purpose of collective defence of the Euro-Atlantic area.

Q139 **Chair:** The last one was in 2010.

Sir James Everard: This will be the seventh.

Chair: Did you say that Russia in that was seen as a—

Sir James Everard: Strategic partner.

Chair: Yes, but that was two years after they invaded Georgia.

Sir James Everard: It was two years after they invaded Georgia.

Chair: And we thought we should still be friends with them.

Sir James Everard: Yes, because, through approximation, change through trade and economic partnership, you were going to change them.

Q140 **Dave Doogan:** Just supplementary to that point, General—it is nice to meet you, by the way—you said you believe that the defence security posture that has manifested itself in the Indo-Pacific tilt needs to be looked at again and that it is not going to endure. Is that correct, or am I putting words in your mouth?

Sir James Everard: For me, the Pacific is almost a political issue. I am not saying we will not send aircraft carriers off there to do exercises, but, militarily, I am just saying that it is not a NATO—

Q141 **Dave Doogan:** In projecting that force of the carriers to the Indo-Pacific, you also said that that is more about, at the very most, security. It is certainly not about defence, and it is certainly not going to manifest itself in combative operations.

Sir James Everard: No. In the integrated operating concept, we make much of the fact that we would configure a large proportion of our force to operate below the threshold of conflict, capacity building et al, and then return to warfare at graduating numbers. I do not know what the



needs are in the Pacific, but, yes, I am sure there are roles and functions the UK could perform to make partner nations better—training, courses, capacity building and all that sort of thing.

Q142 Dave Doogan: Have the UK's NATO fill rate and its contribution to NATO exercises been what you would wish to have seen since the limited and qualified recovery from Covid? If the UK could be doing a little bit more, what would you like to see the UK doing?

Sir James Everard: Again, I would apply this to all nations, so I am not singling out the UK. All nations say they are NATO by design, and place NATO at the heart of their defence thinking. That is not true. We know that national interest comes first. NATO is often secondary in their thinking, which means that people do not instinctively think NATO. It is interesting that 80% of the exercise activity that takes place inside the Euro-Atlantic area is done by nations, not within a NATO umbrella, and so you could say you are missing a few tricks there. You could say it does not matter, because these troops are getting readiness and training, but I would like to see, in the future, that every UK exercise is NATO-badged, and not just exercises.

I do not know whether you have visited Sennelager, which was home of the 20th Armoured Brigade. We took the brigade out and kept the forward operating base there. We are sending battlegroups back there to train, with hundreds of vehicles, every year. That is completely compliant with NATO's new operating concept and, in my view, we should be doing that through NATO, making use of the NATO logistic levers and NATO command and control, because it demonstrates good purpose.

I would not send the commandos to Norway without flagging it as a NATO exercise, because it is demonstrating intent. We could do more, but as the UK we are golden children. We do a huge amount in terms of NATO exercises. We are probably top of class, I would have thought, in the alliance.

Q143 Dave Doogan: Specifically in terms of niche capabilities that the UK has to offer NATO—and NATO likes its member states to have something particularly useful that adds something different or distinct rather than just something extra—what does the UK do in that regard?

Sir James Everard: I do not think it is what it does but what it could do, because there is a whole raft of capabilities that nations are now getting, which they will not place under NATO command and control. If you take cyber, for example, NATO is a defensive alliance, so it would not choose to do offensive cyber. Therefore, you have a framework—sovereign cyber effects provided voluntarily by allies, or SCEPVA—where, effectively, NATO would contract out to allies the effects that they wanted to be done. People understand that, for cyber, it is complicated. In the future, weapon platforms will be bought, such as US PrSM system—the precision missile system—that comes into service next year. This is, effectively, a



tactical missile system that can be fired from the HIMARS or MLRS and can reach out 450 to 500 kilometres.

Do you see nations placing systems like that under the command of NATO because it has huge reach, depth and strategic impact? More and more capabilities, interestingly enough, are being procured by nations, which, in the long run, will not be placed under NATO command and control, and so you had to have a cleverer mechanism for making it work. UK cyber and UK special forces are hugely credible in the alliance, but the UK will not place them under NATO command and control.

Q144 **Sarah Atherton:** General, you mentioned that some nations have NATO more at their core than others. Do you have any observations about disparities between Government investment and military capabilities for member states?

Sir James Everard: Not really. When the alliance was created, it was created around the idea of American pre-eminence. That exists today, like it ever did, as the NATO force generator. Some 90% of air refuellers are provided by the Americans within the alliance, as are 65% of fast air and 65% of suppression of enemy air defences. The American dominance is so huge that other allies are struggling to catch up. This will come into play again when we move into multidomain operations as the US establishes a system that the rest of us might struggle to keep up with.

Through that NATO defence planning process, all nations are brokered things to do, based on the level of their GDP and capabilities. It is designed to be very fair. It is just that, if you are an American looking in nowadays and you think, “We are doing over 50% of virtually everything,” it does not look very fair.

Q145 **Sarah Atherton:** You have mentioned that the strategic concept is out of date. The NATO defence planning process did not quite accommodate the Russian invasion of Ukraine. You spoke about the desire for common levels of ambition within member states. What should be the UK’s aims and ambitions going into the June summit in Madrid?

Sir James Everard: I have seen a bit of paper floating around with seven names written on it. I cannot remember where I saw it. The UK has done a lot of thinking on what it wants to get out of the strategic concept. Those tensions are writ large, but I will step back a bit and just say that NATO has not been idle. Since 2014, the three SACEURs—Breedlove, Scaparrotti and Tod Wolters—have shown remarkable continuity to drag the alliance to where they think it needs to be.

Why has the alliance worked so well in relation to Ukraine? It is because Ukraine was not a crisis for the alliance. Ukraine is not part of NATO; therefore, it is not a crisis; therefore, you could use SACEUR’s strategic directive for peacetime management and enhanced vigilance, or whatever it is called—peacetime structures—to co-ordinate a response. That SSD has been planned since 2014. The new SACEUR’s AOR strategic



plan has a very clever division beneath it into sub-strategic plans, which are domain-specific, in recognition that domains in their own right have real power in the way that perhaps they did not used to have. Those domains are executed by theatre component commanders on behalf of SACEUR, separate from joint force commanders, who are running regional plans.

Some of the things we grew up with as young soldiers—the idea that you always have a single supporting commander—will disappear. You are going to have modern C2. You are going to have two simultaneously supporting commanders in the same battlespace. This is all work that has been done since 2014. If it is mainstreamed, be it in slightly softer language, into the strategic concept, it will be very good for the alliance. There is a plan there that gives it real purpose and sets it out in a way that defends and secures the Euro-Atlantic area sensibly.

Q146 Sarah Atherton: You say it has not been a crisis for NATO, but certainly it has had an impact on the UK's supplies of munitions and explosives. It has gradually stepped up with Brimstone and armoured vehicles. We have now gone to the next step, where the PM has announced £300 million of support for cyber-jamming and electronic warfare, et cetera. This is costing us and using our stocks. What is the next step?

Sir James Everard: When I said it is not a crisis, in technical terms it is not, and that is very convenient for NATO. You see a lot of allied nations supplying capability to Ukraine, including munitions, when we know from their own returns that they were at probably minimum levels of investment in those areas anyway. This is the big challenge.

I was in Sweden yesterday, and someone told me, "If you want a Stinger, it is a five-year waiting list." I do not think the NLAW production line is up and running at the moment. The Americans gave a third of their Javelin holdings to Ukraine, and so, if you want a Javelin, Lockheed Martin must be rubbing its hands, but you are going to be waiting a long time for it. Defence industrial capacity, which has atrophied across most of the western world, is a real challenge. I do not know where we go on it, because these conflicts consume munitions at an alarming rate.

Q147 Mr Jones: Leading on from the last question, this is about resilience in terms of infrastructure. There has been a lot of talk about the infrastructure of Europe, such as bridges, railway gauges and electricity supplies. Where are we at in terms of NATO? I know there was some work done to try to co-ordinate this, but have we taken this seriously?

Sir James Everard: NATO leaders made a declaration in Warsaw in 2016 that we were going to agree a set of resilience objectives, which we did. There are seven of them and they cover governance through to infrastructure and food security. Later, in Brussels, they reinforced that with a commitment to strengthened resilient initiative as a collective goal but with national responsibility—in other words, "We want you to do it, but we are not going to come and check up on you."



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I do not know what the UK has done on that. We are lucky in the UK, because we have a good doctrine for national resilience, which is well understood and people practise it. Look at the number of cyber-attacks that Ukraine has dealt with. There is a very good Microsoft report on it, if you have not read it. There were 450 destructive cyber-attacks in the first month. Are we set for that level of—

Q148 **Mr Jones:** No, but one of the key early lessons from Ukraine is logistics, is it not? You can have all the kit and war stocks you like, but what if you cannot get them to the front? This is going to have to be addressed at Madrid. I will give you an example from when I was in Latvia a couple of weeks ago. The Canadians arrived. Their electricity system is different from the Estonian system. That might seem basic, but you are a professional in terms of knowing that it is pretty critical, if you turn up and cannot plug your electricity in, for example, is it not? You can have as much technology as you like, but what if you cannot get the basics right? Is there a realisation that this really should be on a par with, for example, the procurement of weapons?

Sir James Everard: I do not know, but, of course, over several defence reviews from the end of the cold war, we went from just in case to just in time. I do not know whether the political urgency is there to reverse some of those funding shortfalls that give you a logistics framework and system that meets the demands of high-intensity conflict. It is a challenge.

Q149 **Mr Jones:** Can you remember Operation Saif Sareea, where we had Challenger tanks without air filters?

Sir James Everard: Yes, but we built those tanks to fight in northern Europe and then sent them to the desert.

Q150 **Mr Jones:** Exactly, but that is a good example of where you invest in a lot of very capable kit but, if it does not have the right air filters, it is pretty useless. The concern I have is that, in concentrating on modern weapon systems and things like that, if you do not have the logistical and interoperability chain behind it, they are pretty useless.

Sir James Everard: They are and, of course, that brings us back to the earlier conversation that, in a NATO where people did not focus regionally, you could not pre-position stocks. You could not go there and put in place contracts that deliver some of the things you need. The NATO force integration units that exist in virtually all the B9 countries exist to help allies that arrive to integrate into the world of commercial support and everything else. If you know you are going to be fighting, let us say, from Lithuania up to the Kola peninsula, you can focus on it, and pre-position and do all the things we used to do in the cold war. You can see a way through it.

Q151 **Mr Jones:** Yes, but it gets complicated, because it links into investments that might not be military—for example, the use of EU structural funds for bridges—if they are not taking into account that they are capable of



being used for military purposes.

Sir James Everard: You do need a bit of a Solomon. It is very interesting. I am a tank soldier and I see the discussion going on around tanks at the moment, which I find fascinating, because tanks give you firepower, mobility and protection. A tank, used well, is still a battle-winner. A tank, used badly, is a death trap. Of course, the T-72 is a very good tank for what it was designed to do, with big frontal armour, driving at speed, at 75 kilometres per hour, carrying 20 rounds in an autoloader, loading every five seconds. It is fantastic. It is designed to be part of an operational manoeuvre group that penetrates and exploits.

As you have seen them doing in Popasna in the last week, if you use it without flank protection and not as part of a combined arms manoeuvre group, you are going to die. There have been lots of jack-in-the-boxes as these things have been exploding.

Q152 **Mr Jones:** The future of tanks is a discussion for a future date, but at least you are an armchair general who has some experience rather than the many armchair generals who do not have a clue what they are talking about. We have touched on this already in the response to Sarah's question, and it is about NATO partners ensuring that their industries not only have sufficient production lines but have that resilience. Is that on the NATO thinking at Madrid?

Sir James Everard: I do not know, and it plays into NATO 2030, which talks about much better integration in this field than we have at the moment. In NATO, many things are national—your personnel policy, your leave policy and how you are buried is all national business. Logistics tends to be national business. To fix that in the last NATO command structure adaptation review, it created a new headquarters—Joint Support and Enabling Command—commanded by Germany, to try to resolve some of these problems and to provide a level of knowledge and continuity. That is a functional, not a ground-holding headquarters, but it is still early days and it will probably be a number of years before we see how successful that is.

Q153 **Mr Francois:** General, you talked about the very high usage rates of munitions in Ukraine. One lesson that seems to be emerging, as you say, is that you get through munitions incredibly quickly. Is that not a problem in terms of our future military planning and our industrial relationships? You have a natural creative tension. On the one hand is so-called just-in-time manufacturing, where you want to make everything as efficient as possible to reduce cost, and yet, on the other, in military terms, what you want is resilience and an ability to produce stuff over time, and to keep producing it if you need it.

Is thought being given, both in the UK and in NATO, to how we can now try to square that circle, because, somehow, we have to, do we not?

Sir James Everard: NATO tried to address it back in its founding years through the process of standardisation, so that you could all buy the



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same, but it has not worked that well. The first NATO standard was on communications, and people cannot speak to each other, so it has not worked that well.

I do not know. It is a huge challenge. My experience of our political masters is that they absolutely hate spending money on ammunition, because it sits there for a few years and then you have to use it or chuck it, and it is very expensive. I do not know how you get round that, and one needs to go back and work out what we think we are going to use.

Q154 **Mr Francois:** The reason I ask the question is that, when General Ben Hodges, the former commander of the US Army in Europe, appeared before this Committee several months ago, he said the UK had participated in a core-level exercise in the United States.

Sir James Everard: I was mentoring on that exercise—US Warfighter.

Q155 **Mr Francois:** Can you confirm what he told the Committee? We have no reason to disbelieve him. He told us that, in all the simulations that were run, the UK division attached to the core ran out of artillery ammunition after about one week.

Sir James Everard: It deployed with what it believed to be a month's holding of ammunition and had expended all of its ammunition within a week, yes.

Mr Francois: In essence, that was exactly true.

Sir James Everard: Yes.

Q156 **Mr Francois:** Do you see any sign that the Ministry of Defence, post the integrated review, is beginning to take those sorts of really quite worrying facts into account?

Sir James Everard: I do not know, because I do not sit in that world. Interestingly enough, I am seeing Ben Hodges tomorrow. We brought him on as a logistics mentor for NATO, because he absolutely understands the point you are talking about: usage. He is a customer who understands how many engines and—

Q157 **Mr Francois:** I have one more. Let me try to rephrase it. Please give the General our compliments tomorrow. He gave very helpful evidence. If you were still DSACEUR, would you be worried by the fact that on a major exercise the UK's "warfighting" division ran out of ammo after a week?

Sir James Everard: Yes, I would be worried by it, but I would not be surprised by it. It is interesting. Enhanced forward presence is effectively an activity. Nations did it off their own bat, but NATO set the level of daily rates of supply that we wanted them to bring. The UK probably has the most of anybody forward deployed. Canada was making up the numbers as I was leaving, because it is a long line of communication.



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In large part, people are well down on what you need. Why is that? It is because they do not have it, because they are using it for training or because they are replacing it slowly.

Q158 **Mr Francois:** Lastly, is that going to be a lesson that hopefully comes out of Madrid? We have to revise—

Sir James Everard: I talk about the desire to get out of the weeds and look long term. I think that will win in Madrid. I do not think people will be fixated on what they would see as the minutiae of national business. It is not; it is absolutely core. There is no point having these weapon platforms, if they cannot shoot.

Q159 **Mr Francois:** I am sorry to push back. It is a pretty fundamental point. You can have all the highfalutin strategy you like. If you run out of ammunition, you are no good to anybody, are you?

Sir James Everard: You are not. Of course, there is a NATO defence planning process, which is designed to keep nations honest. If they do not comply with it, what do you do?

Q160 **Dave Doogan:** Lots of smaller NATO allies find it challenging, naturally and very reasonably, to come up with large-scale capital equipment, even to the extent of fast jets. What can NATO do to better enable the smaller allies? There is a utility in the number of NATO allies, much less the size of those allies themselves. Quite apart from the strategic element of having them inside the tent, they might contribute 2% of GDP, but, if their GDP is very small, whether it is 2% or not is a moot point.

That being the case, what can NATO do to further encourage specialisms that complement other NATO allies' ability to project force on a large scale, which those countries could never hope to do?

Sir James Everard: For some of these smaller nations, in the future model it is not about projecting force. It is about focusing on your own defence and doing it well. That is a slight mind change, which is helpful. NATO encourages partnerships. In the JEF, the Joint Expeditionary Force, the UK aligns with nine nations in the north to bring coherence and rigour to operational planning in the north. Those countries, as a result, make a better contribution to a more coherent plan.

Germany has a similar thing; France has a similar thing. There are methodologies to try to get after it. The fact remains that some of these nations bring other things like big ports or useful airfields.

Q161 **Dave Doogan:** Geographical location is central to the debate?

Sir James Everard: Yes. Montenegro is hugely geopolitically important. It has a big port and a very small army. It might offer tens as opposed to hundreds or thousands of soldiers, but it provides an airfield and lots of other things.

Q162 **Dave Doogan:** NATO values where it is as much as what it can do?



Sir James Everard: Yes, absolutely.

Q163 **Chair:** Before we go on to NATO expansion, can I just ask a question about Brimstone? I understand that Brimstone has been gifted to the Ukrainians. Is that correct?

Sir James Everard: I have read that in the newspaper as well. I do not know.

Q164 **Chair:** How are the Ukrainians firing this weapon system?

Sir James Everard: I saw a video, which you have probably seen as well, of it being fired from a wheel-based vehicle. What you see with Ukraine is that they are hugely inventive. Once they get something, they are making it work. They are firing Harpoon from trucks and Brimstone from Land Rovers.

Q165 **Chair:** It is slightly digressing, but I am taking advantage of your being here. Brimstone is arguably one of our more potent bits of equipment. You fire it mostly from the air, but would you have liked to be able to fire it from a recce or a tank?

Sir James Everard: I would have. When you go back to the lessons learned from this campaign, one we are going to learn is that artillery has been the big killer, the big disruptor. These missiles—the Javelins, the NLAWs and the Brimstones—have had a very good psychological and surgical effect, but they have not been the big killers. You need them, though.

Q166 **Chair:** We did a study on the land warfare capability, and it seemed bizarre that you have such a fantastic weapon system but it could not be fired from the ground. We are now, weirdly, handing them to Ukraine and they can do it. I did not want to digress.

Sir James Everard: They have found a way of doing it, but I am literally going off YouTube.

Chair: We can always rely on YouTube.

Q167 **Sarah Atherton:** On NATO expansion, specifically Finland and Sweden, ratification is going to take between six and 13 months. We have to expect that Putin will try to hinder that process. Finland, in its own right, has its own F-35 programme and Sweden is described as a net contributor, but Finland doubles the length of NATO's border with Russia. What are the implications of Sweden and Finland being members of NATO?

Sir James Everard: For President Putin, it is a disaster. His whole purpose has been to halt NATO expansion and in a fell swoop he has doubled it with a massive chunk of real estate and two very capable armed forces.

I was in Sweden yesterday. They are now hugely pro the idea of joining NATO. Of course, they are enhanced opportunity partners. There are



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modalities for strength and interaction—that is the term, MSIs—that would underpin our relationship in crisis and conflict. It is not unusual to find a Swede or a Finn in a NATO headquarters. We exercise with them regularly. They were the biggest contributors to Trident Juncture.

We are pretty close already. In terms of defence co-operation, I know they are non-aligned, but they have an absolute network. I cannot list them all. They are part of the JEF; they are part of this; they are part of that. They are definitely going to bring added value to the alliance. I do not see them necessarily wanting anybody to turn up. They might look for someone to command them better, but we will see.

We have a lot to learn from them. There is a lot of attraction in their total defence concept. They are teaching children in primary school about the effects of disinformation and how to spot it. You cannot win a war today unless you take a whole-of-society approach. That is something that in the UK, probably because of the channel, we have never been very comfortable doing.

Q168 **Sarah Atherton:** In your wisdom and given your years of experience, what do you think Putin's response will be?

Sir James Everard: Putin often tells you what his response will be. He has said, "You should not do it." Then we had the "energy off, energy on" thing. Now he has said, "Okay, fine, you can do it, but I do not want to see any NATO forces being positioned on your territory." That will be up to Sweden, Finland and NATO commanders to decide.

The whole Russian campaign, from a professional point of view, has been abject. It is abject for a number of reasons, but primarily because it was not planned by the Russian general staff. The people who should have planned this operation did not plan it. As you see them getting a grip of what is going on, we should not be surprised if they start to make pretty significant gains pretty quickly. You can all track the battle. It is a concern.

Putin did not make a big speech the other day at his parade, because his generals are telling him that he is still going to win.

Q169 **Chair:** There are two new members coming into NATO. Should there be a "one in, one out" rule?

Sir James Everard: I think the Russians call it NATO's original sin. No. You are absolutely torn between our belief, as western democracies, that nations must be allowed to choose their own destiny, which I am all for, and the absolute Russian belief that the weaker states do what they are told. NATO's open-door policy is here to stay.

Q170 **Chair:** I am being a bit flippant, but there is a concern that there are some among the NATO membership who are perhaps not so inclined to lean into the NATO thinking as we would like. NATO is consensus-driven. Its entire capability is drawn to a halt because of the views of one



country.

Sir James Everard: It is so difficult. When you look back across NATO's whole history, what you see is that in hard times they have never fractured. They have always come together and worked, not without their difficulties. There was Suez for the British and the French. The Iraq invasion was described by the American ambassador to NATO as a near death experience for the alliance. Somehow, everybody realises that they are better in than out.

In the treaty there is a mechanism to leave the alliance, but there is no mechanism for you to be ejected. Even if you thought someone was being a real pain, I do not quite see what you would do about it.

Chair: I wondered what word you were going to use, but there we go.

Q171 **Dave Doogan:** In terms of spending, and spending more on defence, some countries are investing in new technology at a quicker rate than others. What does this do to the interoperability relationships within NATO? Will future NATO deployments be able to achieve a common operating picture? Are we all going to invest in slightly different tangential directions and become diffuse or are we going to remain cohered?

Sir James Everard: It is a very important question, because, wherever you go in the alliance, you see people talking about multidomain operations or multidomain integration. There is no common understanding in the alliance as to what that is. Allied Command Transformation is on point to develop an understanding and a road map. Is it an extension of AirLand Battle? Is it pure joint? You know all the catchphrases: every sensor, every shooter, every C2, any target, all networked together.

It is interesting. Even the Americans, with all the resources they have, are only talking about an interim operating capability, a single taskforce in a single theatre, by 2028 and full operating capability, two taskforces, by 2035. That gives you an idea of just how complicated this is.

Joe Anderson, an American general—I do not know if he has spoken here—is a bit of an expert on this. The Swedes were asking what their role is in this plan. His view is that we have to work out whether allies form part of the puzzle or are all in. I do not know what "all in" means, but I know it is going to cost you some money.

Q172 **Dave Doogan:** Within that context and dynamic, it is easy to be seduced by modern technology in terms of cyber, the sub-threshold and the greater concentration on the space domain. Educate us. You want to take and hold territory. Are we ever moving, in any of our lifetimes, to an era where we see armour deleted from the necessary equipment? Will we see air power and air superiority deleted because it is too vulnerable to cyber-attack and it cannot even get off the ground, much less create any kind of meaningful dynamic effect?



Sir James Everard: Again, this is a big question. I am speaking very personally here, but there is an argument that says you do not need to get involved in the dirty business of fighting because you are very technically proficient and, therefore, you will fight at range and provide cyber and all these clever capabilities to the alliance, which means you will not get your hands dirty. That would be a disaster for the UK. The reason people like the UK is that we have a sensible acceptance of risk and shared risk. I hope we do not go down that way.

You are right. Liddell Hart talked about the chief incalculable of warfare being human will. What Ukraine shows, first of all, is that human will and fighting spirit are absolutely crucial. In the end, if you want to hold or seize ground or clear urban areas, you need a combined arms manoeuvre capability. As you know, that is a jigsaw. For those who perhaps have not been down and seen an armoured battlegroup at work, the whole idea is that you integrate your capabilities so that, in order to counter one, the enemy makes themselves vulnerable to another.

That is why we used to have BATUS. That is why, as a troop leader, you would do the same drill 10, 15 or 20 times. You needed to perfect your understanding of your place in the battle. If you did not have it, you could not focus on the three big questions of, "Where am I?", "Where is the enemy?" and "Where are my friends?" I thought it was very interesting. Yesterday, Anderson was saying that, as the brigades that are trying to work on multidomain have focused on it, they have found that their core skills have atrophied. It is very difficult to do both to a high standard.

I am prattling on here, but the really big point on multidomain is that you can only integrate domains if the domains themselves are excellent at what they do. You cannot integrate fresh air. You have to perfect your skills at a low level and then integrate them. This is going to be a real challenge.

Q173 **Mr Francois:** NATO has been working on the NATO warfighting capstone concept. Leading into Madrid, now we have had the Russian invasion of Ukraine, how will that have to alter? What are likely to be some of the major conclusions coming out of Madrid post the Russian invasion?

Sir James Everard: It does not need to change. If you take, first of all, the NATO military strategy, which was driven by the 12-stars of the CMC, SACT and SACEUR, not by the political level, that recognised Russia as a threat. That was underpinned with a concept in the DDA, the concept for the deterrence and defence of the Euro-Atlantic area, and the SASP underpins it with more plans.

This told you, to explain it in two lines, that, first of all, if you are to deter, you need to be able to demonstrate an unambiguous ability to defend, and to defend requires you to dominate key geographic areas and the domains of warfare simultaneously. From everything we have seen in Ukraine, that is still valid. Secondly, you need to take a threat-



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driven approach. In other words, you need to understand how, in this case, Russia uses its military forces, its paths to power or whatever it is, so that you can move, if necessary proactively, to prevent it from achieving its objectives.

That is valid. The NATO warfighting capstone concept looked further afield and asked, "How will we fight in the future?" It was brought down to a somewhat simplified warfare development agenda, which has layered resilience and all these great terms in it. They are all still valid, but it plays into multidomain operations. If I got the 30 chiefs here to write an essay on what that means, I promise you that you would get 30 different answers, because we are all learning.

Q174 **Mr Francois:** One thing we can now do is stop dealing in euphemisms. We do not need to talk about competitor nations. We can use language that is perhaps reminiscent of the cold war. We can say that there are threats, and they are Russia and China.

Sir James Everard: Yes, hooray. It makes exercises a lot better. It is very interesting going down to mentor the UK higher command and staff course, which has totally rewritten its entire scenario in a month or three weeks to use "Ukraine one year hence" and "Russia." What a relief it is that you are no longer fighting fictional countries with a book this big, which you have to memorise to tell you what they do. That is just as we used to do in the cold war. You would fight the real enemy and be the better for it.

Q175 **Mr Francois:** We have a degree, dare I say it, of intellectual clarity now. That must help right down to the frontline corporal, if he can talk about the threat and the enemy in terms of preparing to fight and defeat them, if he has to. To what degree will NATO also touch on some very touchy issues at Madrid? Some of the largest members of NATO are actively bankrolling the Russian invasion. Are we going to get into any of that? It is pretty fundamental, is it not?

Sir James Everard: I am lucky. It is a political issue. I would say that the strategic concept will be what the Quad wants it to be. Recognising that the smaller nations also get a voice, the big nations will decide what they want it to be. I come back to those two dilemmas: long term or short term, big political or big military. I am sure they will find a language. As DSACEUR, I would like to see collective defence being prioritised as the primary task and being force-driving. If those two things were in there, I would be happy.

Q176 **Mr Francois:** NATO is a political as well as a military organisation. The politics part of this is that our enemy is being partly underwritten economically by—let us stop using euphemisms—the Germans, the Hungarians and others. They are members of NATO, but they are bankrolling the war. How are we going to address that at the Madrid summit, or is everyone just going to be ultra-polite and tiptoe around it? The summit will be a farce, will it not, if we do not address the elephant



in the room?

Sir James Everard: People are trying to eat the elephant slowly. You see progress in some of these areas. For Germany, this is a fundamental shift in approach, in strategy. Germany has long believed in approximation—that you change Russia through trade. I am going to make a figure up here, but something like 40,000 German businesses rely on Russia for their livelihood. There is a historical relationship there that they are seeking to change

Q177 **Mr Francois:** In simple terms, Merkel bet the farm on it and she was proven to be completely wrong, brutally wrong. In fairness, the entire German political establishment backed the same bet, across left and right. Given that we are now where we are, to what extent is NATO, as a collective defence organisation, going to address these brutal realities? Are they going to keep tiptoeing around it? If they do, you might as well cancel the summit.

Sir James Everard: I come back to this. They will come up with a set of words that makes everyone happy, and you will be able to take away what you want from it. That is consensus, is it not? There is no point going to Madrid and having two nations block the new strategic concept. In the NATO military strategy, it says that NATO's centre of gravity is its unity, solidarity and coherence. We could not even agree on one word; we had to have three words to make sure everybody got their bit in.

Q178 **Mr Francois:** Forgive me. In world war two, we did not pay Hitler to fight us, did we?

Sir James Everard: No. I do not know. I bet they probably had industrial links.

Dave Doogan: Ford did.

Sir James Everard: It is a problem, is it not? If you look at Germany, the Chancellor is already paying a price at the polls for the cost of living crisis. He knows that, if he turns off all the fuel, he is in trouble. These nations will get to the right place, but not as quickly as we would like.

Mr Francois: That is fair enough. Thank you.

Q179 **Derek Twigg:** Coming back to some of your earlier comments, I understand that your answer will probably be, "If we are asked to do something, we will do it; it is a political decision." There has been talk of the NATO or UK navies escorting grain ships out of Ukraine, and a concern about what will happen if Russia manages to cut off Odessa and the link to the sea, with the knock-on effects in terms of Africa, the developing world and all that.

Is NATO capable of intervening in that way? What would the consequences be from a military point of view?



Sir James Everard: NATO is hugely powerful. It is geographically placed in a dominant position. In NATO, these things happen in two ways. Either nations table motions at the military committee or the NAC, or they write a food for thought paper that sets out their arguments and that gets momentum. In the end, it takes leadership within the alliance.

This is a very interesting point. NATO does not have a chain of command. Capitals retain decision-making authority. The perm reps are effectively a recce screen. Some of them are more empowered than others. It does require the capitals to lead. Of course, as I said, if NATO is not central to your thinking by design, if it is secondary to your thinking, sometimes you do not think of NATO as a response to some of your concerns. Any country, tomorrow, could say, "I think we should be doing this." It would be debated, and it would shape the work-up options and people would—

Q180 **Derek Twigg:** Just to be clear, you are saying that NATO could do it militarily. What would the military advice be, if that position was taken, in terms of the possible response from the Russians?

Sir James Everard: We have this debate all the time. We used to understand deterrence quite well. Escalation and counter-escalation were cards to be played in the game. I would say we have lost that knowledge. There has been a complete fear in the alliance of provoking Putin, which means that more often than not you do not stand up; you give ground and give ground.

We see with Putin that he just takes more and more and more. This is where, I am afraid to say, political leaders have to take brave decisions. You are right: if you escalate and Putin challenges you, you are potentially into conflict and everything else. Modern deterrence, or even old deterrence, is not as distinctly understood as it was. You know this. You see all the study days going on in SHAPE and elsewhere. People are going back to learn the lessons of the great warriors, the Kissingers of this world.

Q181 **Derek Twigg:** We are going to have to make a decision at some point, sadly. We cannot just continue to back away and back away from it.

Sir James Everard: No. This world food crisis is going to drive some sort of response. Would NATO do it? Would it be a coalition of the willing? Would it be done under the UN? All these things need to be—

Q182 **Chair:** Is that not the point here? There is a fire in Ukraine. If that fire is not put out, it will spread and it will become a bigger problem, which NATO will have to address. Should NATO not grow up and recognise that, with a sense of duty and the self-confidence to lean in and extinguish the fire today, rather than seeing it grow?

Sir James Everard: The lean-in, though, is a problem for an organisation that people have joined on the basis of the North Atlantic Treaty. Ukraine is not part of NATO. You would never get consensus among the 30 nations to engage directly in Ukraine.



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Q183 **Chair:** Then let us cut to the chase. If you are not going to get consensus, on which I fully agree, and if we are recognising that this could spread and will spread if Putin has his way, there has to be a coalition of the willing. Would you agree with that?

Sir James Everard: If NATO is not an option, it has to be a coalition of the willing.

Q184 **Chair:** Would you like to see Britain lead that coalition? I do not expect America to do so. Therefore, would you like to see Britain lead that?

Sir James Everard: I am taking a defensive view here, because I am a strategic planner. That is what I used to do in the MoD. Tell me your end state. Tell me what you want, and I will go away and look at it.

Q185 **Chair:** It is Russia out of the Ukraine mainland.

Sir James Everard: This is just Everard talking but, if Putin thought he was going to lose Crimea, I genuinely believe he would go—

Chair: I did not mention Crimea deliberately.

Sir James Everard: Crimea, for the Ukrainians, is part of Ukraine.

Chair: I said “Ukraine mainland.” Crimea is a longer-term complex challenge.

Sir James Everard: So out of Donbas and out of Luhansk?

Chair: Out of Donbas, out of Luhansk, out of Donetsk.

Sir James Everard: Putin might say, “You and whose army?”

Q186 **Chair:** This coalition—a coalition of the willing: the Baltics, Poland, United States and Britain.

Sir James Everard: I do not think the US will play. That is my personal view. I have heard the President say he would not.

Q187 **Mr Francois:** As a former DSACEUR, your personal view counts, which is why you are here. Richard Barrons, one of your former colleagues, told this Committee a little over a month ago that, in his opinion, NATO is not ready to fight a war with Russia. Do you agree with that?

Sir James Everard: Yes, I do agree with that.

Q188 **Mr Francois:** Could you elucidate on why you agree?

Sir James Everard: The plans we were putting in place to fight Russia, which have been evolving since 2014, are not yet delivered. In terms of people’s readiness, they have not invested in the capabilities you would need for a prolonged war fight.

We have talked about ammunition consumption. I genuinely do not know, for example, what the UK holding of MLRS rockets is. At the consumption rates they are going through them in Ukraine, it would be measured in



days. I am sure it would be, because no one anticipated that level of output.

Q189 **Mr Francois:** I am sorry, but this is important. The reason we are dwelling on this as a committee is that part of our job is not just to say, "The world is terribly difficult" but to have a stab at making recommendations. Between the evidence of General Hodges, you and the other general I have just mentioned, one of our recommendations might be—it may not be very sexy—that we have to start spending a lot more on munitions instead of always buying lots of bright shiny kit with nothing to drop off it. Is that fair?

Sir James Everard: That is very fair.

Q190 **Richard Drax:** I am about to brush off my uniform, if the Chair has his way. There is no one else; we seem to have cut our Army. Just quickly, before I go to my question, General, this goes back to Germany. This is now being talked about quite openly. As a matter of interest, what do you think? We left it at great cost. Why do we not go back to having bases in Germany, or to train and integrate it with NATO? Germany is spending a lot more money. It makes more sense, does it not, in the current political picture?

Sir James Everard: I was the three-star director of military strategy and operations when we took the last brigade out of Germany to the right of 2014. It never made huge sense to our allies then, because it was probably the only brigade that could meet the readiness timelines.

Q191 **Chair:** Did you make your views known?

Sir James Everard: Yes. There was a debate about it with the Secretary of State and others at the time. The decision was made that they would come out based on the savings that could be made.

Q192 **Richard Drax:** What do you think about going back to Germany?

Sir James Everard: You face a dilemma. One of the things our leaders are going to have to discuss in Madrid is whether we are moving from enhanced forward presence to forward deployment. Are we going to strengthen what we are doing there and leave people there for longer, for an extended period of time?

If you agree with those things, you need to start looking at your costs and work out whether it is better to have people permanently based there. The Americans have troops that go for nine months, come home and go back out for nine months. It is a hard paper round, if you are doing that all the time. As you know, our armoured forces are going back to Estonia for, what, the third time now. I am a German brigade commander. I did all my life in Germany, so you are asking the wrong person. I would go back tomorrow.

Q193 **Richard Drax:** NATO appears to have been strengthened by Russia's actions in Ukraine. Were you surprised by the speed of NATO decision-



making and the swift reinforcement of its borders?

Sir James Everard: NATO was very clever. Because Ukraine was not in NATO, NATO did not need to make it a crisis, which means it did not need to activate the NATO crisis response mechanism, which meant that no difficult decisions came up to the NAC. They could just empower SACEUR, under the authority he had in his strategic directive, to get on with it. Yes, they could make the decision to activate all the GRPs,¹ which they did. That gave SACEUR more authority, making his life easier, and led to nations ToA-ing—transferring authority over their troops—to SACEUR.

I am probably a week out of date, but the last time I looked SACEUR had about 42,000 troops under his direct command. All that has been very good. That is why NATO has been clever. They have done it under a framework that was worked out post-2014 and endorsed in 2019. It is clever. That moment of panic, when they thought Putin would rush through Ukraine and move on to the Baltics, passed very quickly. They can now be more measured and come up with a clever, tailored response.

Q194 **Richard Drax:** The deployment was good, but the interoperability was not so good. In short, that is what you have been saying.

Sir James Everard: The interoperability was good, because in large part nations were deploying blocks of capability, and therefore they are interoperable within themselves. In terms of massive armies and stuff, you are always going to have problems with interoperability within NATO.

Q195 **Mr Jones:** On Germany, I resisted calls to withdraw from Germany when I was responsible for it. The plan we had in place then to reduce it down to more manageable areas was a good one, because there was some inefficiency in the footprint there. I can remember saying at the time that it was a stupid decision to withdraw from Germany. Not only was it costly, but the idea of now re-doing it is just beyond any cost. We were basically gifted a lot of those bases after the second world war.

I hear what you are saying, but we are going to have to make decisions. Whether it is as big a footprint as we had in the Rhine and whether it is in the Rhine or even further east, we are going to have to make some decisions about a permanent presence, are we not?

Sir James Everard: I wait to see what our political leaders decide to do. You do not necessarily have to have forward presence. You can strengthen what you have. You can put in place the architecture that SACEUR's concept requires that is not yet built: a joint fire architecture, a much better and more modern indication and warning system. The intelligence has been exceptionally good in this conflict, and open-source intelligence has really come of age.

There are lots of things in SACEUR's plan about which he said, "If we are serious about this, we should do this, this, this and this." We could

¹ General Response Plans



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establish what land command and control model we need. If people start deploying to certain regions, you can build a model and people can build relationships. You can make yourself much stronger without necessarily taking the step of deploying forces.

Q196 **Mr Jones:** For example, when I was in the Baltics a couple of weeks ago, a Defence Minister said, "We do not want to be liberated." There is a real fear among some of the smaller Baltic states. I accept they do not have the strategic depth that, for example, Poland or even parts of Germany would have. I came away with the clear mindset from both that, after the massacres that have taken place in Ukraine, they do not want to give up an inch of territory.

Sir James Everard: Yes, and after the massacres that took place in their own countries when they were handed back to Russia the first time. They will all go down fighting. It is very interesting. Yesterday in Sweden I was given a copy of the doctrine on national resistance. You are going to be cutting throats for years to come. It is impressive. All the Baltics have a very good concept for national resistance. I remember going to a parade in Latvia. You were stood there for an hour while quad bikes drove past, each towing four MILAN and four Stingers. At the time you thought "pfft", but it does not look so daft now. They will fight; they will not want to be liberated.

Q197 **Mr Jones:** How did they integrate local plans like that within the broader NATO strategy?

Sir James Everard: This has been one of the weaknesses of the NATO approach to date. Nations have been reluctant to expose their own national planning and integrate it with the alliance. Nations have agreed, as the second strand of SACEUR's strategic plan, not only to allow the development of these domain plans but also to allow the development of regional plans, led by the Joint Force Command, that integrate national and NATO planning for the first time.

Will all nations do that? I do not know. I was with the Estonian MILREP the other day. Estonia is all in. If it is, Lithuania and Latvia probably are as well.

Q198 **Mr Jones:** Certainly when we were there, when the announcement of Sweden and Finland came, they were talking about a Baltic plan. Will that fly?

Sir James Everard: You look at where the UK has greatest influence, knowledge and experience, and you look at the membership of the Joint Expeditionary Force. It is the Baltics, Sweden, Finland and Norway.

Q199 **Mr Francois:** On that point, in 1939-40 the Finns did a Ukraine against the Soviet invasion of over a million men, with the Mannerheim line and all of that. You have explained to us that you often have Swedish and Finnish staff officers integrated. Are Finland and Sweden already de facto, even if not de jure, members of NATO?



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Sir James Everard: No, because they do not get a vote. They are not included in decision-making. If they are asked to do something, they do it because they want to, not because they have had a vote in the process. Becoming a NATO member will mainstream them into the military and political decision-making process.

Their politicians have always been very cautious to maintain clear blue water. Even in these exercises, if you wanted to put aircraft into Swedish airspace, you had to go through the full DipClear process. There was no cheating on that.

Q200 **Mr Francois:** If Putin were to keep going, if he went into the Baltic states, for the sake of debate, and clearly triggered article 5, would you expect the Finns and the Swedes to turn up?

Sir James Everard: Yes.

Mr Francois: Even tomorrow?

Sir James Everard: Yes.

Mr Francois: In which case, de facto—

Sir James Everard: I say tomorrow. They have a co-operation agreement in that part of the world. I do not know. They will keep their cards to their chest, but I am pleased they have joined because they bring a freshness of thinking in many areas that will be very good for the alliance.

Q201 **Chair:** Just to bring things together, General, with Sweden and Finland joining, the border with Russia almost doubles for NATO.

Sir James Everard: It gets bigger, yes.

Q202 **Chair:** We have touched on the British Army of the Rhine, where we were based for much of the cold war. Would it be logical to shift that spine of defence to the east and to have NATO assets based in Finland itself?

Sir James Everard: I do not know. Finland is not looking for military reinforcement. They are looking for political guarantees. They have a pretty capable army. In the war you talk about, of course, in the end Russia came back stronger.

Q203 **Chair:** The reason I say these things—yes, people may push back on this—is that the last strategic concept was 2010, which was out of date even then, as I implied earlier. Two years earlier, they had invaded Georgia. Maybe step back from that. This is a question we ask many people sitting in your seat. Over the next five to 10 years, is the world, particularly Europe, going to get more unsettled and more unstable or is it going to become safer? Do you have a crystal ball?

Sir James Everard: Lavrov was talking about reintegrating with the west quickly as and when this thing passes. I do not see that happening. Their army has proved to be genuinely rotten in many ways. Their



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behaviour is so beyond acceptable that there is going to be a lot of bridge building. I also just do not see the war in Ukraine ending any time soon. It is going to be a long war.

Q204 Chair: With that in mind, going back to the integrated review, there has been pushback on any suggestion that we need to revisit this or even look at defence spending. Would you agree that we need to consider how we bolster our armed forces, and perhaps look back at how we have cut our land forces, troop numbers, tank numbers, Warriors and so forth? Would you agree that perhaps we should be reversing some of these cuts?

Sir James Everard: Yes, you need to go back and look at the integrated review in the light of the lessons we have learned from Afghanistan. There are some quite useful lessons in relation to capacity building, which show where it works and where it does not work. There are lessons coming out of Ukraine: ammunition consumption, urban fighting, subterranean fighting. These are all things that people need to take away.

We also need to look at what we have said we will do to deliver NATO's new concept, deterrence and defence of the Euro-Atlantic area. NATO looks to its big allies to lead by example. The UK, France, Germany and Italy are the ones that need to stand up. If you lead, others will follow. If you do not lead, everybody will hide under the hedge.

Q205 Chair: That perhaps is the question mark. I have just come back from Latvia, as has Kevan. Others have been visiting other parts of Europe. Our stock is high. There is no doubt about it. We have done extremely well building on the support that we started in 2014. The question is whether we are still unclear about what the mission is, what we are trying to do to support Ukraine and what victory actually looks like. Then that bigger picture, which you have just touched on, is about how we deal with an adventurous and aggressive Russia.

Sir James Everard: For me, you focus regionally. You can continue what you are doing with Ukraine and helping Ukraine, but the natural territory for Britain is in the north. We should be bringing a UK stamp, within NATO, to command and control and the fight in the north. There is a hotchpotch of NATO headquarters up there. You have now extended further north. You have the UK Allied Rapid Reaction Corps. That can go anywhere, but why does it need to go anywhere? Just give it a focus.

Chair: It is real estate that we are familiar with, as you said.

Q206 Richard Drax: Lastly, you said that the Russian army is getting better and that, sadly, it is learning from its ineptness, which clearly it is. You also hinted, in your statement, that at some point they are going to start making large gains. That is on the one side. In the west, we are saying that Ukraine cannot fall. That is what people are saying. It just cannot. When does the west say, "We have to intervene"? Ukraine potentially will



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fall, if this Russian might just keeps battering the country month after month and they get better at fighting, which sadly they are going to do.

Sir James Everard: There is this race on, is there not? We all think that the Russian phase one failed; phase two is to secure Donetsk. They went through a period when it was just going to be Luhansk, and now it looks like they are going back to their original objective of trying to secure a new frontline along the Dnieper river. That is definitely the most they can do at the moment, because it has been very expensive for them in all sorts of ways. Let us hope they do not get that far; let us hope we stop them where they are. If they get that far, there will be an operational pause while they take stock and go again. At that stage, hopefully we will see the impact of more modern western weapon systems coming in.

I do not know how you get your intelligence feed. I go to an open source, because it is almost as good as what you get elsewhere. That is a feed for the last week. I do not know whether you have seen it. I will give you a copy. It has brilliant analysis. Here you are: 250 close air support sorties in the last 24 hours. Whereas they have not been using aviation and air very successfully, all of a sudden they are. Tanks are working in co-operation with infantry for the first time, with flank protection and all the things you would have expected to see from the word go.

Q207 **Chair:** Is that because they have now reintegrated Russian army personnel rather than FSB? They started off doing the decision-making.

Sir James Everard: We had a good brief in Sweden from an intelligence analyst. His absolute view was that Gerasimov and the general staff had finally wrestled back control of the fight from some pretty inept FSB commanders.

Chair: We expect a more competent approach.

Sir James Everard: You expect a more competent approach and, actually, probably a better design for battle as opposed to dribbling on, deception and feints.

Q208 **Chair:** My final question is to do with the vulnerability of Odessa, the port. This links to the cost of living crisis. Do you have a concern that somehow, if that is taken or pummelled like Mariupol, you could end up with a landlocked country?

Sir James Everard: When we sat down in the early days of the war, all of us thought that, if Putin was not going to go for the whole country, he would certainly go for the south, the land corridor all the way through to Romania, and take Odessa. I cannot imagine that it is not still on his wish list. I know the Ukrainians have done a huge amount to fortify it.

Chair: The trouble is that it is also harming themselves, because they cannot get the important grain out. General, thank you so much for your time this afternoon. It has been highly informative. We are very grateful. On behalf of the Committee, thank you very much indeed. That brings to



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a conclusion this Committee session today.